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ABSTRACT

The current discourse about access can be changed by using three adjectives: old, wide, and deep. Regarding the first, since the 1870s, when the professionalization and specialization of knowledge took off in so many fields, inequalities in education have actually increased where it matters most--who knows how much of what is available to be known. Second, the conversation must be widened beyond education. Increasingly, the discourse in Britain has widened into a cultural, historical one concerning patterns of class development. Third, access also stretches down deeply into where people, including old people, live and die, into their very selves. A dream or vision for education begins and ends with the individual. In this vision, education is market led; experience is used to make courses relevant to experience; learners replace teachers; and learners produce their own pathway or choice of courses that together make a degree or whatever aggregate it is that they want. General emancipation can drive access as a fully social movement alongside the economic imperative it undoubtedly is. Three quick benchmarks are as follows: (1) learners need access to the best; (2) the worlds of education and training must be brought together; and (3) access cannot be other than awkward and painful. Finally, access depends on funding. (A list of 32 notes is appended.) (YLB)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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ACCESS:

'What and Whither, When and How?'

ED 410 439

FOURTEENTH MANSBRIDGE MEMORIAL LECTURE

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
1991

CE 074 618

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Chair, Vice-Chancellor Elect, distinguished guests, friends, and those who have, I hope, dropped in on the off-chance.

I am going to divide my lecture this evening into three parts. The first will be one in which - as a social historian recently appointed Principal of Ruskin College - I join in the 'access' conversation and thereby alter it.

Access. There is a huge amount of excellent contemporary writing and reporting on the subject. Reports have reported, working parties have worked, recommendations flow: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2.

But, but, but ... We are in the middle of an old, old field of force, an old debate. It is more than a debate, much more than a simple 'policy' question for the 1990s. It is an active struggle which we are continuing.

The contest is a large one. 'What distinguishes the human animal is that it moves in a world of meaning; and these meanings are constitutive of its activities, not secondary to them. Ideas are internal to our social practices, not mere spin-offs from them.' The struggle concerns **who** has access to social meanings where we live now. All of us, or the top twenty per cent? It is therefore a struggle over how social – or how anti-social - those meanings are. Another way of putting it: it is a struggle over whether more means different and, because it is more general, more universal than what we have got now, better. The struggle is about whether we really can pull down the old quality versus quantity, more means worse enclosures.

The education which 'access' is about makes meanings. 'What does it mean?' This is one of the most common questions in educational settings, in the seminar, the course, the classroom. The answer depends on who and how many are in a position to ask the question. Real, general accessibility. Equal opportunities. What does it all mean? Once we are all, all of us,

everyone, in a position to answer that question, the answer will of course be unrecognisably different. What does it mean? The 'it' itself will have changed. The exclusion of whole categories of people from full access to what education makes – meanings, explanations, reasons, theories, techniques, sciences – itself changes meanings, makes society different, props up the powers that be. 'Knowledge', as Francis Bacon realised a long time ago, and then nineteenth-century working-class movements campaigned under his slogan, 'Knowledge is Power'.

But that's a more complicated statement, much less of a slogan, than meets the eye. As power relations alter, so too does the constitution of knowledge itself. 'It', knowledge, like 'the state', cannot simply be captured or even extended on behalf of the majority and remain the same. Walter Benjamin rebuked the German Social Democrats for not seeing this during the interwar period. The party, he thought, failed to perceive the double meaning of their slogan 'knowledge is power'.

> It thought the same knowledge that secured the rule of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat would enable the proletariat to free itself from that rule ... This was especially true of knowledge relating to the humanities.

More of the same – and I am talking about content here not 'delivery' – is not necessarily desirable. It could be even more oppressive. In the Muslim world, for instance, there is now

> an increasing popular hostility towards a Western science and technology seemingly far removed from serving social and human needs, but dedicated instead towards supporting the hideous rationality of power within a violent and unjust world.[1]

Such hostility came through from the Women's Movement during the 1970s and early 1980s in the work, for instance, of Christa Wolf. It now comes from environmentalists with the possibility of a new discipline or disciplines which criss-cross human sciences, geography, and economics. And it comes from students who vote with their application forms, away from science subjects. There are very complex issues here concerning the relations between social position – class, race and gender – social power and science or knowledge. Power is

knowledge. Property rights increasingly include intellectual property.

'Knowledge is Power' is also, of course, quite a simple statement, simple enough to have been appropriated by PowerGen in their recent privatisation advertising campaign. As some of the six million people in Britain who are less than functionally literate have learned to say during the last fifteen years, the connection between knowledge (and therefore education) and social relations makes education very material and quite ordinary in the dictionary sense of that word. Its absence makes for exclusion, exclusivity of a very basic kind in a society which is full of, even ruled by, meanings.

A fine writer in QueenSpark Books in Brighton and the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, Margaret Bearfield, once put it this way:

> It's a strange thing to say, but I think somewhere inside me there is an educated woman ... If you're educated you don't have to fumble in the dark like I do. People are all the same basically. We have the same emotions, we all want a better life, we all want to be happy. Education doesn't really come into it in that respect. But education has a powerful impact and people who have had a low education tend to withdraw into themselves. They hold back. They don't trust people who are high-class.
>
> If I could spell well, my writing would be richer. I get frustrated always looking in dictionaries or at the daily newspaper to spell certain words. I know what I want to say, so I give up and say, 'Oh, I'll just put that one down instead.' I'm stopped for lack of education.

Ordinary, in Chambers Dictionary: 'according to the common order ... Of common rank'.

Everybody's business.

At this point, I want to quote from an essay which changed the conversation for me a long time ago. It was first published by Raymond Williams in 1958 in a book called *Conviction*. He called the essay 'Culture is Ordinary', but it was to a considerable extent about education. By happy chance it was republished in *The Guardian* on the morning of my interview

for the job of Principal at Ruskin. I used it then and I will use it now:

> We should recognise that education is ordinary: that it is, before everything else, the process of giving to ordinary members of society its full common meanings, and the skills that will enable them to amend these meanings, in the light of their personal and common experience. If we start from that we can get rid of the remaining restrictions, and make the necessary changes. I do not mean only money restrictions, though these, of course, are ridiculous and must go. I mean also restrictions in the mind: the insistence, for example, that there is a hard maximum number – a fraction of the population as a whole – capable of really profiting by a university education, or a grammar school education, or by any full course of liberal studies ... I cannot accept that education is a training for jobs, or for making useful citizens (that is, fitting into this system). It is a society's confirmation of its common meanings, and of the human skills for their amendment. Jobs follow from this confirmation: the purpose, and then the working skills. We are moving into an economy where we shall need many more highly trained specialists. For this precise reason, I ask for a common education, that will give our society its cohesion, and prevent it disintegrating into a series of specialist departments, the nation become a firm.'

This is a different conversation from the 1.1s, 1.2s, 1.3s, I have been reading in the Access literature recently. It is social and moral, unlike the discourse of the politicians who, keen on cheap multiplication and fond of long (social) division, now try to exile social and moral considerations altogether. There is a hard, unattractive impatience about so much of the Access debate.

Charles Dickens took great trouble to set the last of his *Christmas Books*, a story called 'The Battle of Life: A Love Story', in a place which had long ago been a battlefield. The story happens in 'one little orchard attached to an old stone house with a honeysuckle porch, where, on a bright autumn morning, there were sounds of music and laughter'. It is – or it seems to be – an innocent, accessible tale. But Dickens was concerned to set it where 'once upon a time, it matters little when, and in stalwart England... a fierce battle was fought.'

> Crops were sown and grew up and were gathered in... Sabbath bells rang peacefully; old people lived and died... But there were deep green patches

in the growing corn... that people looked at awfully. Year after year they reappeared and it was known that underneath those fertile spots heaps of men and bones lay buried indiscriminately, enriching the ground. The husbandmen who ploughed those places shrank from the great worms abounding there.

As an historian of working-class associations in general and of the co-operative movement in particular, I was greatly honoured to be invited to give this 1991 Albert Mansbridge Memorial Lecture. I will return to Mansbridge. When I accepted the Trustees' invitation, I was thinking about Access while reading other things. I immediately wanted to talk about it, in this setting, using three adjectives: old, wide and deep. It is with these adjectives that I now want to try to inflect the current conversation concerning access.

We are in the middle of a field of force much older than any of us in the 1990s, where there are deep and still growing patches of inequality. Since the 1870s, when the professionalisation and specialisation of knowledge (science) took off in so many fields, it is arguable that inequalities in education have actually increased where it matters most, namely in who (how many?) know how much of what is available to be known. The boundaries which define 'educated people' are constantly being shifted in order to leave most people outside them.[1] This has led to new class alignments, even more powerful in their effect than the ones based on the ownership of property in the fixed asset sense which socialists have long addressed.

There is a sense in which the private ownership or enclosure of know-how, expertise, has become a more powerful determinant of twentieth-century societies than patterns of ownership of a more conventional kind. Such privacy surrounds and divides us. Our rulers are now trying to say that there is only one kind of knowledge and it - and it has become an 'it' - has been enclosed by an elite web of individuals or of nations. History, they tell us, has ended where we (some of us) are now.

In the years since his death, the work of Raymond Williams has kept returning to me. How much we need him in this kind of conversation. Williams was very interested in mental and manual divisions of labour at the core of knowledge itself, in the history of such divisions and their present negative effects. I will quote from him again, this time from *The Country and the City*. Like John Ruskin, the inspiration of the two American founders of Ruskin College, Williams deplored the division of labour as the division of humans rather than the division of work.

> The negative effects will continue to show themselves, in a powerful and apparently irresistible pressure: physical effects on the environment; a simultaneous crisis of overcrowded cities and a depopulating countryside, not only within but between nations; physical and nervous stresses of certain characteristic kinds of work and characteristic kinds of career; the widening gap between the rich and poor of the world, within the threatening crisis of population and resources; the similarly widening gap between concern and decision, in a world in which all the fallout, military, technical and social, is in the end inescapable. And to see the negative effects, with whatever urgency, can be to paralyse the will.

If we look at the 'educated'/'uneducated' dichotomy since the 1870s when education was supposedly made more accessible, it has, curiously enough, been more common in the language than before. It is as though new openings - new points of access - have been made in order to reinforce old closures.

There are profound geographical and social - anti-social - divisions of labour in our society. They support inequalities of an obvious kind, material inequalities, but also less obvious inequalities, for instance of educational demand, expectation and desire. 'Who do you think you are?', is asked of Ruskin students, for instance, when they go home. It is asked with some anger, to say the least. Struggles over identity can be **very** violent. Without a great deal of strength they can lead all too easily into a kind of retreat: 'I am, most appropriately, the person who I was and in the situation where I was, before I came to Ruskin'.

> The last recess of the division of labour is this recess within ourselves, where what we want and what we believe we can do seem impassably divided.

That recess - recess not access and very difficult to access - is a deliberate achievement of our present social system, particularly of our means of communication. British inequalities reappear year after year. If they are seen in too recent a perspective, without the long history behind them, they can all too easily be ratified by 'what people want', or appear to want, which may be translated as what people are in a position to demand. By how many modern meanings do most of us feel included? Of what proportion of modern meanings are we able to ask: 'what does it mean?'. Contemporary relations of power, deep inequalities, can easily be reinforced by too thin a conversation concerning access - too new, too narrow and too shallow a conversation.

Fertile spots there are, yes. Real advances are being made in the Access world. It is some of the most hopeful work in all of education at the moment. But some of the protagonists in the middle of our contemporary debates, some of the husbandmen shrinking perhaps from great worms, some of the Access experts I have met during the eighteen months since I became Principal of Ruskin College, seem to think that it is all very new and all very national (what Britain needs) and very individual. The national and the individual seem to go together in conservative ideology at the moment.

Access is sometimes presented as though it has roots no deeper than initiatives such as the admirable CNAA/CVCP Access Courses Recognition Group kite-marking programme. One version of the history carries it no further back than 1978 when the Department of Education and Science invited several LEAs to provide new courses for adults as part of a pilot scheme. There are more than a thousand such courses now with twenty thousand students on them. Excellent. But in this way of telling the story, a movement, which is without any doubt the right way to think of access to education, whether higher or not, gets collapsed into a set of courses. In this way a silent social revolution becomes an inaudible, sensible way of buying places the nation needs. A self-created, collective movement from below - like the ones with which Albert

Mansbridge was so closely associated - designed to transform a whole social system through moments of social opportunity, turns into a provided, individual response from above, designed to rescue the same social system in a moment of 'national' need.

Access, whether with a capital A or not, stretches back a long way in time, when fierce battles have been fought by people acting for themselves, not as proponents of national policy.

Where impulses come from, and where they are known to have to come from by people moving forward with them, matters a great deal in relation to where, in the end, they are going. For the first twenty years of their work it was illegal for the Rochdale Pioneers to set aside funds for educational purposes. They did it nonetheless. *Young Oxford: a monthly magazine devoted to the Ruskin Hall Movement* [Vol.1, no.1, 1899] challenged Oxford as well as seeking entry to it. 'The difficulties... of acquiring knowledge in letters without pecuniary means' which Thomas Hardy explored in *Jude the Obscure* (1899) were thought by some readers, he wrote in a 1912 postscript to that novel, to be 'an attack on venerable institutions'. They were. The Ruskin 'sociology' strike of 1909 'was carried on in pamphlets with urgent titles like 'The Burning Question of Education'.' Increased funding for the WEA as an approved body in 1919-20 was discussed at Cabinet level against the perceived threat of the Labour College Movement.' Corresponding Societies, Mutual Improvement Societies, Adult Schools, educational and extension associations of all kinds, have not been neutral affairs working on consensual objectives. They have been sites of conflict, accessing knowledge in the name of different, voluntary, elective impulses and ideals.

Charles Shaw, a potter, published his *When I was a Child* in 1893, just after the improvements in access to education which went with the 1870 Act were made mandatory on local authorities. His memories of before and after were concerned

with loss as well as with gain, and the loss concerned 'levels', depths as well as heights. The vision of cohorts of the same age group moving together up rungs of a ladder with 'elementary' at the bottom and 'higher' at the top was not quite the impulse behind his own learning. Nor was the international situation of the British economy or his own career track: the national and the individual. Recalling his Mutual Improvement Society of the 1840s and 1850s, he wrote:

> We never dreamt of any elementary pursuit of knowledge. We met to discuss and criticise all things in heaven and earth, and sometimes even a far deeper province of the universe.

Charles Shaw's own narrative was in part a celebration of the audacity of people of his own class in those times in their attempt to produce a knowledge of their own. Set this beside the National Curriculum debates!

> We could expatiate about the universe when an examination in the geography of England would have confounded us. We could discuss astronomy (imaginatively) when a sum in decimals would have plucked us from our soaring heights into an abyss of perplexity. We could discuss the policies of governments and nations, and the creeds and constitutions of churches, while we would have been puzzled to give a bare outline of our country's history.

The hard edge of this enterprise, wrongly called autodidactic as though it was done alone and without organisation – in medicine and many other fields – has been well described recently in the work of Logie Barrow[7]: 'What is lacking', he wrote of the mid-twentieth century compared to the mid-nineteenth century, 'is a confidence that knowledge, once gained, may enable you to do, discover or help decide something important'. That purchase **on** a system rather than purchase of it is part **of** a thicker description of access than the one we get in high places now.

Heaps of men and bones, buried indiscriminately, enriching the ground, such men and women used 'we', the first person plural, and 'we need', in a very different way from its dominant contemporary usages. 'We' can need education and access to it

in order to compete in the harsh climate of international competition, to 'up-grade' our 'work-force' (or 'child-force' as school children have now become) as 'employers, human-resource professionals and training and education specialists concerned with building a skilled and competitive workforce in the 1990s and beyond'.[11] But 'we', a different we, can also need education in order to change that climate:

> In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations, and as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property.[12]

The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. That's a common market, a singular market indeed. That's access, with an enormous and very old A, going back, in that quotation, to the revolutionaries of 1848.

My second adjective chosen to join to the access conversation was 'wide'. We need to widen the conversation beyond education, certainly beyond 'H.E.'

One day last term I was setting off to teach a class. Looking at *The Guardian*, I came across a report of a Labour Party Press Conference on the 'big idea' of education.[13] 'Yesterday's paper on education and training, dubbed Labour's "big idea" at its Conference', the report ran, 'argued for: national monitoring of academic, attendance and disciplinary standards; qualifications targets; better pay including loyalty bonuses; improved training for teachers and a national appraisal scheme.' There were also promises on nursery places, home-school contracts and a general teaching council.

My class was to be on education. It was to students who, broadly speaking, wish Labour well. Was this press conference rising to the occasion, I asked myself? The Burning Question, Young Oxford, Jude, Mansbridge. The big idea seemed to have shrunk. Labour's preoccupations seemed institutional and

narrow, having little to do with values or with citizenship or with politics, in the proud sense of that word, little to do with choice and inspiration or the transformation which Ruskin students describe in themselves.

Reaching quickly for an antidote, I found it, as often, in R.H. Tawney. I xeroxed some pages of that great chapter in *Equality* (1931) on 'The Strategy of Equality', particularly in relation to education. This is where Tawney attacks 'the barbarous association of differences of educational opportunity with distinctions of wealth and social position'. The target then was secondary education. Now perhaps it should be 'higher'.

> Consider the assumptions implied in the view hitherto held of the scope and purpose of secondary education. When the boys and girls of well-to-do parents attain the great age of thirteen or fourteen, no-one asks whether – absurd phrase – they are 'capable of profiting' by further education. They continue their education as a matter of course, not because they are exceptional, but because they are normal, and the question of the 'profit' which they succeed in deriving from it is left, quite rightly, to be answered later. Working-class children have the same needs to be met, and the same powers to be developed. But their opportunities of developing them are rationed, like bread in a famine, under stringent precautions, as though, were secondary education made too accessible, the world would end – as it is possible, indeed, that one sort of world might.

A brief rehearsal of some of the well-known indices will indicate the width, or sociality, of what we are up against. Education is one symptom of a wider disease, one expression of a wider set of inequalities. 34% of people of working age at present (1990) have no formal qualifications whatsoever. The figure is 41 % if qualifications below 'O' level or the equivalent are disregarded. 70% of the United Kingdom workforce leaves school at the earliest opportunity. To the extent that these people get jobs, they mostly get working-class jobs. Of these, 70% at any one time have had no further education or training. Powerful qualifications mean class, or at least money. 7% of all children attend independent schools. These schools produce 25,609 'A' level candidates as against 64,408 from maintained schools in England and Wales. If we look at grades of ABB or higher, 7,706 of these come from independent schools as

against 12,758 from maintained ones. More than £50 million a year is spent on accessing these schools in the assisted places scheme. Those targeted, however, are not the most socially disadvantaged any more than is the clientele of the City Technology Colleges. The resources poured into the assisted places scheme might be compared interestingly with the tithe of such a sum which goes to the long-term residential colleges for adults. Residential education is alleged to be an expensive luxury for some but not for others.

Skilled, manual and unskilled workers (social groups III to V) form 68% of the population. Only 7.7% qualify for higher education. In keeping with the work of A.H. Halsey and others, the Institute of Manpower Studies Report *How Many Graduates in the 21st Century?* (November 1989) suggested that this proportion may have been falling. The same report suggested that if their qualifications on leaving school matched those of professional and managerial parents, there would be 50% more students in the year 2000. Over a twenty year period to 1989 the proportion of undergraduate applications through UCCA coming from administrative and professional families rose from 44% of the total to 51%, with a corresponding decline in the proportion coming from white collar and blue collar families[15]. There may be encouraging signs of change here more recently, thanks to recent Access work. [Although in a National Commission on Education paper dated August 1992 on *Opening Wide the Doors of Higher Education*, Professor Halsey wrote that 'for social class the general tendency towards inequality of educational attainment persists'.]

As is now generally recognised, educational facts are also wide, social, cultural facts about where we live now, needing to be addressed in these ways, not in narrow educational/institutional ones. Increasingly, the conversation about education and training in Britain has widened into a cultural, historical one concerning patterns of class development or 'the peculiarities of the English'. Access, if it is to be real, has to attach itself as a social movement to systematic facts as well as to symptomatic ones.

The third adjective with which I want to try to inflect the access conversation is 'deep'. Access also stretches down, quite deeply down into where people, including old people, live and die, into their, or our, very **selves**.

Doris Lessing invented a new category of what she called 'inner-space fiction' for the novel which succeeded the *Children of Violence* series.[16] She began her work in inner-space fiction with the words, 'For there is never anywhere to go but in'.

That version of access may be quite important for us to retain. Of course, it is not new at all. The nineteenth-century working-class self-education tradition knew about it. The classic among nineteenth-century educational autobiographies, William Lovett's *Life and Struggles of William Lovett in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge and Freedom, with some short Account of the different Associations he belonged to and of the Opinions he entertained* (1876), made a sharp connection between de-skilling – in his case, that of the Cornish rope-making trade – among working people at work and the projection of that absence of skill on to tyrants. Lovett made a remarkable connection between training/educational alienation and the willed absence of democratic citizenship. Craft at work made for a fully-realised notion of craft in associational self-government. Powerlessness in production corrupted absolutely. Re-skilling at work was part of re-skilling elsewhere. In the imagination of Charles Dickens, the Forcing System in Dr. Blimber's Academy in *Dombey and Son* kills Paul Dombey. But before he dies the sea is used, the Brighton sea, in a beautiful evocation of whole parts of that frail self which such a system had denied. 'What the waves were saying' could only be shut out at huge human cost. Whatever the 'attainment targets' met, Gradgrind was not good for people. Bradley Hedstone in *Our Mutual Friend* was not good for himself. In another of Dickens's *Christmas Books*, 'The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain', there is an unrepentant dying man called George Swidger. Swidger is a gambling drunkard 'reckless, ruffianly and callous', denying his father and everyone else. At a certain point Swidger says to his would-be sympathetic helper:

'Why, d—— you! ... I have lived bold and I mean to die bold.' To the

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devil with you! and so lay down upon his bed, and put his arms up over his head and ears, as resolute from that time to keep out all access and to die in his indifference.

To keep out all access. A very different use of access. 'The Haunted Man' is an anti-Faustian tale of one who denies a miserable, unhappy half of himself. He refuses it access. The consequences of this loss of his own history and memory are seen as devastating. Charles Dickens and Raymond Williams could not write more differently. But Williams's early fiction is also largely about the political and personal costs of a less than inclusive, a less than fully social or human version of what it means to be an 'educated person'. In his terms, it is about the difference between intellectuals, however highly educated, and the term he likes and wants to universalise - cultural producers.[7]

In 'The Haunted Man' Dickens wrote: 'In the material world, as I have long taught, nothing can be spared: no step or atom in the wondrous structure could be lost, without a blank being made in the great universe. I know now that it is the same with good and evil, happiness and sorrow, in the memories of men'. The consequences of denial are nothing less than Armageddon. 'There is not,' said the Phantom, 'one of these - not one - but sows a harvest that mankind **must** reap.' Dickens was obsessed by the evils of most contemporary forms of education. They are returning now, more than a century later. 'From every seed of evil in this hay, a field of ruin is grown that shall be gathered in, and garnered up, and sown again in many places in the world, until regions are overspread with wickedness, enough to raise the waters of another Deluge!'

Williams is less apocalyptic:

> We can make, in our turn, a true twentieth-century syllabus ... I mean a full liberal education for everyone in our society, and then full specialist training to earn our living in terms of what we want to make of our lives. Our specialisms will be finer if they have grown from a common culture rather than being a distinction from it. And we must at all costs avoid the polarisation of our culture, of which there are growing signs. High literacy is expanding, in direct relation to exceptional educational opportunities, and the gap between this and common literacy may widen, to the great damage of both, and with great consequent tension. We must emphasise

not the ladder but the common highway, for every man's ignorance diminishes me, and every man's skill is a common gain of breath.'

So, the conversation is about access to ourselves in a full, inward sense, not just to disembodied, disensouled bits or packages of knowledge, discrete modules or units or competences acquired on a 'need-to-know' basis. We need an old, wide and deep emphasis on contexts, in which one thing leads to and is understood in terms of another and in which 'vocation' is taken seriously again as life-long enterprise. We are in a much older field of force than that of recent party politics. On the one hand the behaviourist model of the person as a collection of skills, trained to perform x, y or z. On the other, a holistic approach, persons as collectivities of human feeling as well as reason, capacities as well as achievements, past experiences as well as future placements, following the argument wherever it may lead. As a non-state socialist or associationist - like Mansbridge - my feeling now is that 'a full liberal education for everyone in our society', education as autonomous, self-organising, self-determining subjects, is the most fundamental, most revolutionary demand for 'access' we can now be making. In order to produce our own individual meanings, we need equal access to social meanings.

2. In Which I have a Bad Dream, or is it a (better) Vision?

'Our case, after all, is the sociality of general freedom'[11]

I have a dream - a bad one: a nightmare in fact. In grander, Victorian, times - but not by Dickens who had a lighter touch - it might have been called 'The Apotheosis of Individualism'. Or perhaps something which Dickens spent his spirit trying to refute: 'There's no such thing as society'.

Like all bad dreams, the one I am describing is ambivalent. In what follows I am going to oscillate between the bad dream and the better vision which seems, almost, to be on offer. The dream exists just this side of, and hides - gets in the way of - something excellent. There is something just inaccessibly good

behind dominant contemporary versions of Access. This is why they are worth lingering on in company such as this.

This year (1991) I am very much aware of giving a lecture of this kind 'too early'. I am a recent arrival in this field. I can only record first impressions, the sources of my dream. There seems to be a vision about, of radical individualism. It is a revolutionary vision. Starved of resources, the vision becomes a nightmare. This is how I sometimes experience it as an educational manager. My first impressions, then, are of ambivalence, yes, but, more strongly, of contradiction.

The contradictions – unities of opposites, or real, inclusive oppositions – are between a number of things. For example between the seemingly 'good old' and the seemingly 'bad new' all across education. This contradiction is closely connected, in my own mind and work, with where I was as a social, labour historian and where I now am in educational management. Then there is the contradiction between education as down-to-earth, basic, preliminary, material, and education as elevated, high, 'finishing', even spiritual. And the contradiction between 'higher' and 'lower' levels, with the whole language of 'level' floating between hierarchy and flatness. And the obvious contemporary contradiction between market and state, with business and strategic planning being forced down to lower and lower levels of intended rationality made absurd by the irrationalities and paucity of resources supplied from above. Individual/national impulses on the one hand and group/collective impulses on the other seem also to contradict, with clashes between an 'I' and a 'We'. Who is the We? From whom and for whom, if you like, are the best impulses in education, like access, currently coming?

In our work in education during the present period there are strong mixtures of the bad, even the absurd, and the good, even the revolutionary. It is difficult to know where to stand or rather, since we are being kept on the move, with which motions and directions coming from outside to identify. This I have found to be a widely shared feeling among 'providers' or at least those among those who have not become cynical about the whole enterprise.

The dream - but also the vision - begins and ends with the individual. The individual wanting to accumulate, wanting transferability (and therefore commensuration and therefore a currency), wanting credit. She may well need, after all, to take out a loan. The individual in the market place wanting Access - even a card, a hole in the wall.

An image from education might help in understanding why I dream like this. It is impossible to put into words. This sort of material comes through my mail every day.

This is from the Dorset Institute of Higher Education.

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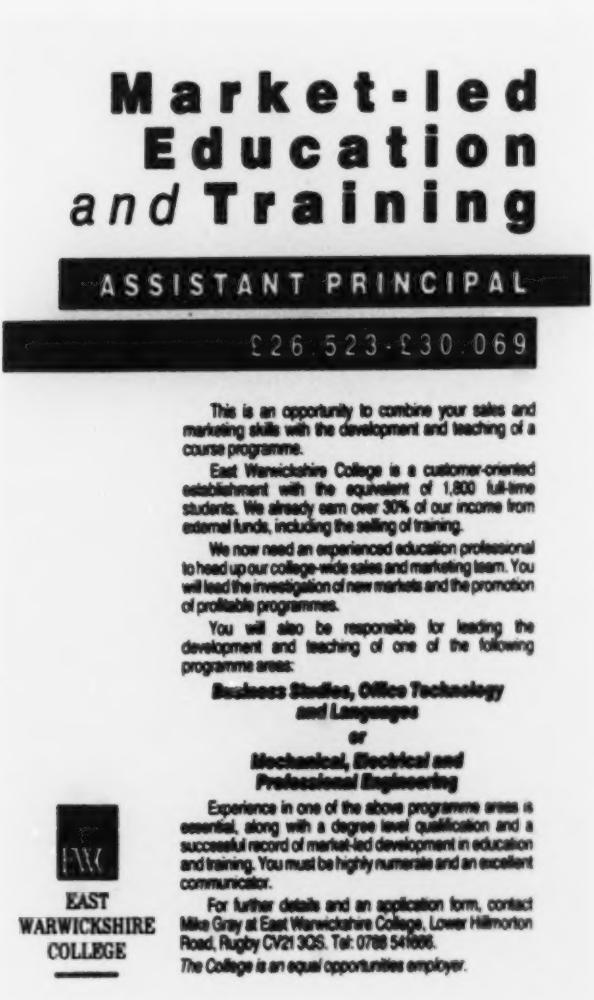
The individual 'I' dotted as customer or as consumer in whom and for whom the nation 'invests'. Then there are providers who are in the business of giving the customers what they want, as though it obvious that they already know. But is that how people come to education, already knowing? Certainly not in the experience of Ruskin College since 1899.

The assumption may be that everybody wants the same thing. This is why a currency may be possible. Everyone prefers exchange values to use values, to be cashed in at some point. But when? Everyone, it seems to be said in the dream, wants to rub along with the dominant values, the common sense of the surrounding social order. A competence (modest). Promotion in, at best, work. At worst a job. Jobs. Job Centres. Employment. At least they used to be exchanges, even labour - a fine word Labour Exchanges. Educating for employment. Work. 'Work-related activities do not detract from general school work', I was told in a DTI Enterprise and Education leaflet I was sent as a parent in July 1989. 'They may even help with finding a job'. Language is always important, telling us where we have come from and where we are going. This is what Chambers Dictionary tells us about the keyword 'job' as recently as the revised edition of 1977. Job. Noun. 'Any definite piece of work, especially of a trifling or temporary nature: any undertaking or employment with a view to profit: an appointment or situation: state of affairs (colloquial): a transaction in which private gain is sought under pretence of public service: an end accomplished by intrigue or wire-pulling: a criminal enterprise, especially theft'.

Of course, it's not as bad as that. This is only a dream. Everybody does have the right to make, perhaps not to 'make it', because that always means other people being unmade on the way, but the right to be a producer, to produce, the right to work. But in the dream, 'jobs' are big, and the word never has pointed towards social and moral choices concerning production.

The 'I' is in the market. This is where customers are given what they want. Given, or perhaps 'sold' might be a better

word. The Principal of an Oxford FE College refers to students as a 'walking resource'. There are other, contradictory currents around more complicated than wanting/desiring market-led education and training.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In this advertisement, market-led goes with a different kind of language, also quite big and growing in the dream: the language of 'we need', 'you will'. We need, you will, coming from providers sounds different from market philosophy. It is, indeed, a nightmare inversion of the market, where the customer is ordered about.

As long ago as 1961 Raymond Williams observed that

> the popularity of 'consumer' as a contemporary term deserves some attention ... It materialises as an individual figure ... the person with needs which he goes to the market to supply.

'We think of my money', my career, my future, 'because parts of our very idea of society are withered at root'. Since then, of course, we have been told that it, society, does not exist.

> In a society whose products depend almost entirely on intricate and continuous co-operation and social organisation, we expect to consume as if we were isolated individuals, making our own way. We are then forced into the stupid comparison of individual consumption and social taxation – one desirable and to be extended, the other regrettably necessary and to be limited.[7]

In the 1989 DTI Enterprise and Education Initiative Leaflet, the language was of helping your child to develop valuable skills for his or her future'. Good. More commonly in the 1990s there is a 'we' which seems to be either national (we as a national resource) or single institutional (we need, you will). And in either case, it is usually associated with being competitive – what we need in order to compete. For example, a **national** curriculum; business education partnerships. What is 'business'? The same as 'production'?

Another image. This time from Hatfield Polytechnic.

'A forward looking approach to market needs. Not so much an annual report but an open window.' I've always seen open windows as things to look or fall out from, not enter through (access) except perhaps in the course of a job. 'The very valuable national resource which we represent.'

1989 is an appropriate time to present a review of Hatfield Polytechnic. We enter the 1990s with a strong academic reputation, built on high expectations and high standards established over the last twenty years. We face the future with a forward looking approach to market needs, responsive to the demands for new courses and flexible patterns of study, and with a determination to produce literate graduates with verbal, numerate and high technology skills.

We also intend to maintain and expand our services to industry and employers, with an emphasis on collaborative applied research and professional updating.

This is not a formal Annual Report but an open window on the Polytechnic's versatile and comprehensive range of activities. I hope it will provide an interesting focus for all who would like to know more about our work, and who will thereby be encouraged to make use of the very valuable national resource which we represent.

Professor Neil Buxton MA PhD
Director

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In the dream, the 'I' comes to access the market, dotted with prior learning or experience. We are excitingly near a better vision at this point. In the bad dream APEL, as in the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, is not built on, starting from experience, following the argument wherever it leads, as in the pedagogy of the early History Workshop at Ruskin 25 years ago. It is used as a substitute for, a reason for not having to do, a particular unit or level of training/education, as if result and process are disconnected. In the nightmare versions of the bad dream, negative experience, as in having been an alcoholic or having had your child taken into care or having had a criminal record, would be used to subtract from the base line. The 'I' would start not with a blank sheet but with black marks already on it. In the bad dream, experience is made relevant to the grading or accrediting arising from particular courses. In the good vision, experience is used to make courses relevant to, by rooting them within, experience. And alongside APEL there is APEW, the Accreditation of Post-Educational Work.

The individual shops around. She wants credit, bits of value added, validation. Costs are cut. Walking resources can walk out, go elsewhere, exit as well as access. Public spending is saved in any one of a number of ways. It is made private. The individual not the society, pays. These two - the individual and the society - appear as things in the dream rather than as the relations they really are in the working world. In reality they are not so separable. In the dream, the individual, not the society does the spending, at the cost of borrowing. She also spends in the private sector wherever possible. It is more 'responsive'. Self-financing. Cost recovery: the mule becomes self-acting. Overheads are also saved because the individual aggregates courses from a number of different places, thus de-institutionalising her package, whether at level one, two, three or four, keeping the providing institutions 'lean'. The institutions can franchise out, like Benetton or Wimpey. The putting out system. The 'I' collects competences on a need-to-know basis with each unit a discrete, one-off module. Round pegs need round holes of the right, exactly the right, circumference.

'What does it all mean?' has become 'how do I fit in?' 'They' provide certification for my place within the system. With efficient teaching, in the dream, necessary qualifications can be delivered neatly packaged in a one-to-one fit between intention and result.

In the vision learners replace teachers. In the dream, individual outcome is preferred to collective process in education, and discrete units of knowledge or skill are valued more than contexts in which further questions arise from each week's answer. The trouble with liberalism for its detractors always was that its best products could not be measured or commensurated. That is why good liberals always had trouble with the single, intermittent vote as the measure or epitome of political participation or political access. Full access, of course, is about much more than that. For a start it is about union or association. Our present democratic arrangements - for popular access to politics - are no more the fulfilment of John Stuart Mill's project than our present educational arrangements - for popular access to education (H.E.) - are the fulfilment of the project of people like Albert Mansbridge.

I will wake up soon. The bad dream continues with sorting, grading and classifying. Individuals in it are arranged in an infinite series, like signifiers in Saussure's theory of language, each one differentiated from the other. But this is worse for people than for words because the series is hierarchical like a form list, arranged from top to bottom, graded. There was controversy when classification was introduced into the honours degree system at Oxford. It was quite rightly seen as a matter of principle. The first draft of the History National Curriculum Working Party Report was baroque in the number of different 'attainment levels' it proposed. They are still there. They are far more than any education/business link seen from an employers' point of view could conceivably require. Everyone in the dream is credited with a value within a graded rate of exchange: not a fingerprint, still less, hopefully, a genetic print, but a print-out specific to them. A Record of Achievement. Passports, yes, but passports of a nightmare late-

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twentieth-century kind, not of the nineteenth-century variety. Passports which prevent the bearer from crossing as many frontiers as they open. Credentials so attached to particular routes that they are also about disqualification.

I will wake up. But interpretations are, in this case, supplied with the dream. Education, as I have said, makes meanings, theories, reasons, sciences, interpretations. These are our products as educators. This is what we make in the education industry, quite properly so called. The transfer of material, economic language to education is fine provided that the moves go the other way too, from education to industry. Parity of esteem.

In sociological work on the classroom during the 1950s we learned about hidden agendas, contextual, even subliminal, interpretations. In my dream, an answer is supplied to each individual, an answer to the most profound religious or political question of all: what Max Weber called the theodicy problem. This is the problem of the unequal distribution of life chances. Why am I not situated like others? In one version, my bad dream version, of a world of open access, a world of equal opportunity, this question gets answered or interpreted in individual terms. The explanation is given in terms of who I am. Identity is seen as a bundle of isolated competences, skills, vocational qualifications, etc. A particular fit is thus achieved between our present social arrangements and each one of our personal capacities. Who we are is what we are good for. In nineteenth-century terms this would have been weighed or interpreted as our moral worth, with all pre-existing relations of power - gender or race as well as class - left out. A real nightmare which Dickens explored so vividly in *Dombey and Son*. This was the nightmare from which liberal visions of adult learning have long tried to liberate us, shaking the links in the chain between who and where we are now and who and where we might be in the future.

In my dream, of course, such liberal versions of adult learning have been increasingly proscribed, seen as old-

fashioned. Michael Young conceived his *Rise of the Meritocracy* more than thirty years ago as a supposed PhD thesis written in 2034 by an ex-Manchester Grammar School boy. His case against the meritocracy was precisely its correlation between merit and rule. This he found even less satisfactory than the correlation between birth and rule or property and rule. These were easier to deal with precisely because they were so transparently indefensible. The beneficiaries of meritocracy by 2034 had become totally confident about their right to power and wealth. It had a built-in rational explanation. A meritocracy, Michael Young felt, 'narrows potential rather than widens it', and treats the less qualified as inferior. It creates its own, quite specific class structure based in part upon an educational system.[2]

On the other side of the dream there is the vision, a revolutionary approach to knowledge and to educational institutions which is quite near to what could have been emerging over recent years. I need the subjunctive mood here, as well as the conditional. The ambivalence is real. 'There's no such thing as society' is a radical, even a revolutionary, and not just a reactionary statement. The vision is one with which any 1960s radical capable of being excited by Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*, or anyone who got excited by the beginnings of the Open University during in the 1960s or anyone who read Paulo Freire, could easily identify.

To achieve a system of learning where the learner or learners are structurally and from the beginning in charge would indeed be exciting. The learner, the student, is not owned by any particular educational provider or any single educational institution. They produce their own pathway or their own sets of courses which together make a degree or whatever aggregate it is that they want. Within single universities and polytechnics such self-produced sets of courses are known as Independent Study. And they have often been seen as close cousins to Experiential Learning. The possibility being disclosed now, at best, is accessible, independent study across and between institutions, with the student/learner being able to accumulate and transfer

bits of credit - some of them not institutionally derived at all - and have them validated or not as the case may be, perhaps by no single institution. A Council, a Federation, a Partnership, a National Institute, an Open College could be the form.

Phrases like learning contract, passport, compact, partnership, are big in the vision. The validating association or body, in the vision, has genuine independence derived from learners' wants and desires. It will be seen to be free of direct, short-term, governmental and temporary definitions of 'national need'. It will be relatively autonomous from what 'we', not you, need: free of that Field-Marshal Kitchener finger which has pointed down this century. That particular definition of need has meant mad manpower strategies which have learned to calculate in terms of hundreds of thousands dead. Workforces being upgraded are historical cousins - related through warfare - to military forces being degraded. The lobbying done during 1988 by the CVCP and the AUT concerning the independence of the Universities Funding Council, trying to clip the wings of the Secretary of State's direct powers, while not entirely successful, seemed to me at the time, and since, like a fight over a deep principle. It is no accident that it was an Emeritus Professor of Public Law, John Griffiths, who rose to the occasion.[7]

There **is** no such **thing** as society, abstracted from, alienated from, not composed by and constructed by us, including us as educational producers. Society is not a thing, a subject capable of acting on its own, unless we let it become so. Any more than is the state, the nation, or even the community. Society need not be an 'it' at all. It is a set of relations constructed, depending of course on who we are, to a major extent in the dream **for**, but to an increasing extent in the vision **by**, us. This, if only we could see it as such - rising to the occasion like Tawney did - is what full, universal and equal access to education would mean.

For the nightmare, read for a moment Goethe's Faust Part I i:

Faust (blinded):

Deep falls the night, in gloom precipitate;
What then? Clear light within my mind shines still.

Only the master's word gives action weight,
And what I framed in thought I will fulfil.
Ho, you my people, quickly come from rest;
Let the world see the fruit of bold behest.
Man all the tools, spade, shovel, as is due,
The work marked out must straight be carried through.
Quick diligence, firm discipline,
With these the noblest heights we win.
To end the greatest work designed,
A thousand hands need but one mind.

And the vision appears in the same work. Mephistopheles:

To gain your end, the act must be your own.
For where your ghosts and phantoms choose to dwell
Your sage philosopher accepted well.
His art and favour, spread for your delight,
Will bring a dozen novel ones to light.
Unless you err, nought can be truly known.
If life you want, then find it as your own.

In an extraordinary chapter called 'The present conditions and perspectives for general emancipation', Rudolf Bahro in his *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* brought it up to date, but also turned to Goethe.

> Our present educational system wants the specialist, whom official species self-consciousness, itself specialised, can address to a suitable pigeonhole. It says to him in Mephistopheles' words: 'Believe the likes of me: the single whole / Was fashioned for a god alone'.
>
> But this era is coming to an end, since the special functions that individuals will still have to fulfil in the reproduction of their material bases have already divided individual life up among them through the educational syllabus, before the human being as such could stake his universal claim. Here we are dealing with something other than the priority of a basic training for the instrumental sciences, which is already at least acknowledged as necessary. What is involved is rather the 'basic training' of modern social man, who should be able to say without the devil's pact of privilege: 'Whatever is the lot of human kind I want to taste within my deepest self'.

That's Access with an enormous and even older A than 1848!

3. *In Which I Fly Three Kites and then Come Down to Earth*

'General emancipation' is a tall order in these short-term, realist times. Nevertheless it is one worth talking about in order

to fuel access as a fully social movement alongside the economic imperative it undoubtedly now is.

Three quick kitemarks. The first starts with a question. Access to what?

Answer: to 'the best'. Access in education is part of access to socio-cultural assets in general. From at least the 1851 religious census onwards, fashionable mid-town churches, often 'High' ones, were wont to build iron churches or mission halls in poor neighbourhoods. The intention was to attract working people to church. The function, it is now clear, was to segregate or to stream congregations, to keep 'the masses' so-called, from the fashionable mid-town churches and to welcome them instead to secondary and more modern – lower church – forms of worship.

Access students need to be able to gain entry to Headquarters, as Oxford is known in Jude the Obscure, as well as to the suburbs. There were hopeful signs of this imperative behind the Brundin Report on Continuing Education in the University of Oxford published in 1980.

A streamed, tripartite, hierarchical system of higher education reflecting the British class system all over again will not do. At a recent NIACE conference, Leslie Wagner warned of what might happen as the pressures of the demographic patterns of the late 1980s and early 1990s begin to fade. He 'forecast that universities in particular might revert to previous admission practices, leaving it to polytechnics to maintain the recently established tradition of widening access. The mild triumphs of the last few years could easily be reversed, and adults forced to resume their role as the reserve army of students.' In this context, the proposals for large in-reaching changes within universities and polytechnics, applicable to all, seem interesting. Access is only a problem to an exclusive system of higher learning. In a recent piece on Short Cycle Higher Education, Tom Schuller put forward a proposal which he described as 'very simple'.

> It has already been sketched out in various forms, in a number of places and at various times: in *The Future of Higher Education* some eight years ago, in Christopher Ball's *More Means Different* last year, and by Brian Pippard at Cambridge University two decades ago. It is that a two year course should be the basic higher education course. At the end of this cycle, some students would go on to a second cycle, taking them to something like the current honours degree level, while others would go straight into employment or other activities, perhaps returning later to the second cycle. Further cycles would lead to masters or doctorate degrees.

From the point of view of unqualified adults like those going to the adult residential colleges, depending on how admissions were handled, this could be a very creative proposal.

The same answer - the best - applies to literacy. As the communications tools of reading and writing were basic (but exclusive) from the medieval period through to quite recently, so the new communications skills of the late-twentieth century information and communications revolution are now in the fullest sense of the word, basic. They are part of what functional literacy will mean in the next decades. We all need access to them: video skills, photographic skills, dexterity like that of David Hockney in faxing and non-chemical camera work, recording and mixing skills ... Means of communications as means of production, but available to everyone, as basics.

A second kitemark: everyone now agrees that the worlds of education and training need to be brought together, each carrying a valuable critique and addition to the other. Ruling class training has had a very powerful effect for a very long time on what stays within the Ascot, Henley, Oxford enclosure and is known as education, particularly in the higher reaches thereof. At the other end, some forms of training are offered with a very minimal educational content and seen as entirely appropriate for massaging the unemployment figures among a quite different social group. Pathways through and mixtures between vocational/employment training and education need to be cut at all levels. The Department of Employment's training and education work needs to join with that of the Department for Education.

This is, of course, already happening. Or rather it is already envisioned. It seems to be an all party big issue for election campaigns in a hopeful way, as well as a growing practice in schools, colleges, adult education institutes and open learning networks. What Training and Enterprise Councils will be able to achieve in this regard remains an open question.

I take comfort from the tradition from which this Lecture series springs. In his *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere*, M.E. Sadler wrote in 1907:

> necessary as it is for England to develop, in every way that may be possible, the technical training of the worker for his work; necessary as it is that such training should be closely associated with the workshop and with the practical conditions of the trades; we believe that side by side with this technical training, there should go, for the workers not less than for the leisured, an education in the Humanities, an education which touches the imagination, the heart and the conscience.[24]

A third quick kitemark: access cannot be other than awkward and at times painful. While our existing class, gender and ethnic divisions remain as powerful as they are, the ride is going to be bumpy for many individuals. I speak about this with some feeling, coming from Ruskin. 'Delivery systems' without counselling, without residential settings used in flexible ways, without more or less safe settings within which whole life transformations can occur as they have done in Oxford Colleges for generations, will not be adequate. Grundtvig's visit to Oxford and idealisation of a collegiate community was crucial to the invention of the Danish Folk High School tradition. Today, however, such colleges are bound to be full of conflict. All the inter-class awkwardness and struggles of life within the early twentieth century - three year tutorial classes, conducted in the evening for two terms, one year preparatory classes intended to funnel students into the longer rigorous tutorial classes .... shorter one term and one session classes ... weekend and summer schools, remain. The conception of sustained dialogue between tutor and students, trained intellect and experience, has never been easy for either.[25]

Recalling 'labour and learning' towards the tutorial class

innovations of the early twentieth century, Albert Mansbridge wrote:

> In general it seemed only reasonable to assume that if only 75% of English people were engaged largely in manual work, then at least 75% of the ability ought to derive from them.
>
> The method and content of the opportunities would, however, of necessity be determined by the working men themselves in co-operation with university men ... the beautiful prospectuses produced by educational institutions had no meaning for them. It is, after all, a feature of the English character that it will not rise to anything which it does not co-operate in creating.

Therein lie some tensions, and not only in the gendered language. As Mansbridge himself wrote, 'a great effort will be needed to make this plain'.[2] Mansbridge knew a great deal more than he is currently given credit for, particularly concerning his celebration of the working class roots of learning combined with his wish to transcend - not to deny but to get through and beyond - class. 'Fellowship' was a struggle not an easy chair. His 'spiritual' language goes with his emphasis on practical skills, on the teaching of writing, spelling and so on. The writing pledge within the tutorial class form was a combination of commitment to the 'highest' products which education had to offer with a commitment to 'basic' training in functional skills.

To come down to earth, finally, access means money. It is the absence of resources which so often turns collaborative visions into competitive nightmares. No-one at this lecture needs me to tell them that for the last five years or so we have been living through times of radical reconstruction in education, pre-, post-school, lower, middle, higher, community, further, and adult. More is promised with an intended combination of centralisation and atomisation, the classic early industrial revolution mix: opting out locally, opting in nationally. Ours have been times of profound projected educational change, associated in this instance, for change is by no means always like that, with considerable demoralisation and a great deal of distress.

The discontinuity has often been lived as a threat, as something happening to us as we do our jobs in education. Hence perhaps the stress, the felt absence of agency, the denial of negotiated change, negotiated with and between producers. The restoration of a sense of professional negotiation would be a major achievement for any future government, releasing all kinds of energies. I say projected change, because it is increasingly unclear how much and how many of the radical projects proposed during this time will actually be realised.

It is also becoming clear that many of the projects have been in bad faith, in the sense that while they purported to be about education they were actually about money, that is to say about decreasing public spending or shifting it from the locality to the Centre. 'Getting the government out of the marketplace', said Mr. Heseltine a year ago, 'is an unreal debate'. 'The first essence of an effective capitalist economy is the education system'. The same, he said, applied to training and to research and development.[7] 'I reaffirm', said John MacGregor on 27 September 1989, 'a doubling of numbers in Higher Education over the next 25 years'. Education, said John Major at Scarborough, is the key to the 'mobile, dynamic and diverse society' which he favours.[8]

This means resources. Without them we are in a world of ideology. George Walden's *The Blocked Society*, a Tory Reform Group pamphlet, is a highly-strung plea for such resources – in effect arguing for the integration of private schooling, paid for by the abolition of mortgage tax relief. There have been other vivid pleas. 'A nation which can bomb targets with minute precision at a distance of thousands of miles cannot, apparently, provide more than a minority of its children with sufficient education to perform even the simplest of arithmetical tests...' 'The contrast between the high efficiency and morale of the British forces fighting in the Gulf and the dilapidation and decrepitude of public services at home could scarcely be starker'.[9]

But as soon as particular projects point towards more resources, even though they have been much trumpeted

educationally, they tend to be weakened or dropped. The National Curriculum and National Vocational Qualifications are two examples, from above, of projects which have run into serious resource problems. Equally, businessmen excited by Training and Enterprise Councils have been depressed by the Treasury. A real opportunity to involve local industrialists in local education and training in ways which private schooling, limited liability and national taxation have inhibited since the late nineteenth century, and in ways which bore such progressive fruit during the 1870s in places like Birmingham and with industrialists like Joseph Chamberlain, may be missed. Teachers' pay provides a further obvious example.

The projects of the last period, as projects, remain radical enough. But access for adult students, particularly for those who have the least social clout like women, ethnic minorities, working class leavers of many kinds, means financial support. Local responses in this matter have been brave but must be inadequate. It is a question of regional and national policy commitments of a quite specific kind. We need signals - in the end from Government - that such commitments will be made. Open College Networks are themselves on the point of collapse because of the absence of Local Authority funding. Open Colleges, Open University Networks, need proper funding not on the fringes of established, closed institutions but reaching into them. Not colleges without walls, but where walls are at least permeable, allowing Pyramus and Thisbe to play, to act out visions from the grotesque, from the basic to the high. Far too much of providers' time, personal and institutional, is spent in the sapping work of responding to financial distress and emergency, personal and institutional. The provision whereby unemployed people are allowed to study part-time whilst in receipt of benefits has become increasingly restrictive. In addition, stricter procedures for interviewing and monitoring long-term unemployed people under the Re-Start scheme make it more difficult for them to take advantage of the 21 hour rule and to engage in part-time study. For many unemployed people who are unable to obtain a grant for a course of study and for whom study under the 21 hour rule is

financially prohibitive and subject to intolerably strict benefit regulations, a place on an employment training scheme may be the only option left. But this is likely, in some areas, to be a poor substitute in terms of the quality of training on offer. It is also likely to lack any kind of progression routes or pathways to further, higher level courses.

Proper statutory provision for adult learning. Social Security regulations which at least do not impede access to education and training. Full compensation for loss of housing benefit in the so called Access Funds, or restoration of benefit. Employment training with an educational basis, linked to other training and educational pathways rather than linking back to the less eligibility ethos of the old Poor Law. Adequate mandatory awards, for part-time as well as full-time study, without the disincentive for students at all levels of getting into debt. Imaginative funding for return to study for the over 50s.

All this would help. It is scarcely a grand vision. 'A vision beyond the blinkers', as Sir Claus Moser put it in January 1991, announcing his National Education Commission.[50] Meanwhile Karen Phillips and the father of her baby daughter have combined debts of £14,000 after both have completed their degrees, hers at Sussex, his at Sheffield.[51] In Social Studies 9.4% of male students under 21 left courses or failed in 1988, and 18.1% of men over 21. The figures for women were 7.7% and 16.2% respectively.[52] This cannot have been because they were all stupid. It may have something to do with other kinds of resourcing.

If we are to get adequate funding for education it may be that, in the end, some kind of earmarked taxation or national fund or entitlement of a National Insurance kind may be necessary. Otherwise, whatever the vision, training will always be somebody else's job and education, hermetically sealed from it, will always be a service provided by overworked and underpaid people who can readily be blamed for all its deficiencies.

In such a setting Access will always be less than full and less than universal.

NOTES

1. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology*, 1991, p.73.
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